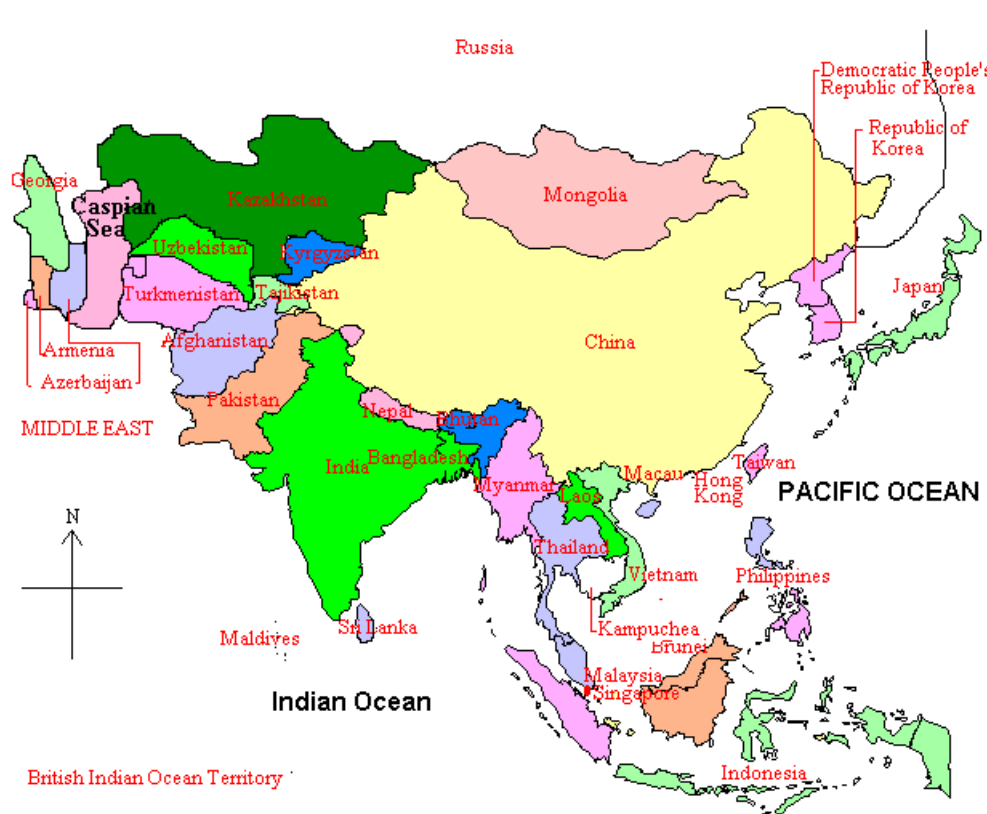


# SETTING TOBACCO CONTROL RESEARCH PRIORITIES for ASIA



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Presented in Panel Discussion ' International Tobacco Control'

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Conference on Tobacco or Health,  
25 February 1999, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

## TOBACCO CONTROL POLICY - LINKED RESEARCH

Although smoking -related diseases are among those causing the highest disease burdens of the world tobacco control has not been a priority of public health in many countries. Tobacco control policy needs science-based evidences to build up public agenda that leads to political agenda and consequent policy building. These come from well planned tobacco control policy-relevant researches.

Approximately US\$665 Million is allocated annually for global expenditure on tobacco control research, including \$500 Million expended by the US government. Most of the funds are granted for health sector and insignificant amount is given to the non-health, e.g. economic, cultural, and environmental, policy-linked researches.

Developing countries are usually weak in tobacco control policy, having inadequate financial and human resources and almost non-existent political will. There is a great need for international support to have tobacco control researches that are valuable to build country-specific policy and actions to curb tobacco consumption of the people.

## SETTING TOBACCO CONTROL RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR ASIA

The RITC (Research for International Tobacco Control) convened in Pattaya, Thailand during 11 - 13 November 1998 to initiate formulation of a sound Asian agenda for tobacco control research. Participants were from different countries in the region, i.e. Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, They were selected with the criteria of being knowledgeable in tobacco control policy and measures of

the countries, in research methodology and being capable of putting agenda into policy. Other resource persons and observers were from Canada, Zimbabwe and Turkey. The three-day meeting culminated into the following conclusions:

1. RESEARCH on the SUPPLY SIDE and ITS DETERMINANTS: *Tobacco production, crop substitution, and ecosystem.*

For these the researchable issues are:

- 1) studies of elasticities of supply in each country, e.g.;
  - what is the elasticity of supply with respect to different determinants ?,
  - what is the time profile of these supply elasticities ?;
- 2) comparative studies with respect to marketing, credit, insurance, guaranteed purchase for tobacco and alternative crops, e.g.;
  - what is the status position ?,
  - what changes are required for achieving tobacco control ?;
- 3) what is the nature of inter-dependencies between tobacco supply and health ?;
- 4) country studies on negative non-neutralities in policies Vis-a-Vis tobacco;
- 5) studies of socio-economic profiles of different sectors involved in tobacco, e.g., farmers, vendors, laborers, and traders;
- 6) studies to find out who are the shifters from tobacco supply, e.g., create profiles of those who shifted permanently or temporarily and then fell back into the "tobacco trap";
- 7) studies of status position regarding tobacco cropping in different countries. Does it involve single cropping, mixed cropping, complementary cropping, and other ?;
- 8) studies of the alternatives for;
  - tobacco specific input suppliers, tobacco farmers ( for both alternative crops and alternative opportunities), labor, traders, tobacco producers, and vendors.

2. RESEARCH on THE DEMAND SIDE and ITS DETERMINANTS:

*EPIDEMIOLOGY and BEHAVIORAL ASPECTS, ADVERTISING and ENDORSEMENT, TRAFFICKING.*

For these, researchable issues are:

- 1) periodic national smoking surveys which includes age and reason of initiation, prevalence in different sex, age groups, region, types of tobacco products, and socio-economic profiles of smokers;
- 2) studies to find smoking -attributable mortality and morbidity in the population;
- 3) opinion survey of social acceptability of smoking, various tobacco control measures, tobacco companies' various tactics of advertising and promotion;
- 4) the various types of legal, illegal, and circumventive tobacco advertising and promotion, including satellite and other cross border broadcast, and how to curb or counter them;
- 5) the various factors involved in cigarette smuggling, e.g. magnitude of the problem, revenue lost, success or failure of suppression, and the role of tobacco companies.

3. RESEARCH on the ECONOMICS OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND: *TAXATION, SUBSIDIES, PRICING, MARKETING ARRANGEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES*

For these the issues that should be studied are :

- 1) studies of tax harmonization in relation to different rates of taxation applied across various products and countries, to the regional trade agreements, and others;
- 2) studies of elasticity issues, e.g. tax/price/demand nexus, price elasticity by subgroups(e.g. according to sex, age, and socioeconomic status), and cross elasticity;
- 3) studies of the earmarked taxes – the existed one and the ways and means to establish this measure;

4) studies of subsidies, both by government and industry and direct and indirect subsidies;

5) studies of activities of the government tobacco monopolies and the multinational corporations.

#### 4. RESEARCH ON TOBACCO CONTROL PROGRAMS, HEALTH EDUCATION, BEHAVIORAL MODELS REGARDING SCHOOL CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, WOMEN etc.

The researchable issues are studies of :

1) the most effective tobacco control programs – general as well as for various forms of tobacco products;;

2) the most effective media and educational materials that can be used in tobacco education.

3) appropriate way to integrate tobacco use with other subjects on behavior in health promoting school program;

4) Appropriate inclusion of tobacco control content in the curriculum of medical student, in reproductive health education for pregnant women, and others;

5) The best ways to utilize role models and community leaders, e.g. teachers, doctors, religious leaders, celebrities, etc. for anti-smoking campaign;

6) The most effective method of tobacco education that can be carried out in different settings, e.g. educational institutions, workplace, military and police forces, and others;

7) The most effective methods of tobacco education that can be carried out in people of different occupations, e.g. transport drivers, sex workers, vendors, fishermen, women groups and others.

#### 5. RESEARCH ON TOBACCO CONTROL POLICY, MULTIDISCIPLINARY and COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO OPTIMAL POLICY MIX

Research issues are:

- 1) studies of the effectiveness of all factors involved in comprehensive tobacco control programs;
- 2) studies of the empowerment of women, decision makers, religious leaders in tobacco control program;
- 3) identify the alternative economy/ crops for farmers and dealers;
- 4) determine the factors influencing smoking cessation and rehabilitation;
- 5) regular assessment of the problem of tobacco use and trend of smoking – related diseases

## 6. MULTI-COUNTRY AND COMPARATIVE RESEARCH IN ASIA: EMERGING ISSUES

Countries in this region may be net importer, net exporter or self-sufficient. Types of products may vary, e.g. leaves, cigarettes, or others. Ownership can be public or private, domestic or multinational.

The emerging issues consists of;

- trade environment,
- role of electronic media, especially satellite telecast,
- 'denationalization' of the government monopolies by the MNC,
- demographic and epidemiologic transition, and
- environmental destruction and hazards.

Because of these emerging issues researches should be done to find out :

- 1) crop substitution, both at micro and macro level;
- 2) tax harmonization within the regional trade block, e.g. AFTA (ASEAN Free Trade Area);
- 3) the scope of tobacco advertising via electronic media, especially satellite telecast of sports, culture, and other events;
- 4) political mapping of politicians' relationship with tobacco, especially the MNC, political commitment in tobacco control, anti-tobacco groups, and others;

- 5) contribution of tobacco to the economy in terms of tax revenues, employment, advertising revenues, donation to charity, foreign exchange earning, and others; and
- 6) trends in disease burden caused by smoking.

In the final session the participants discussed what should be the next step leading to the success of having researches that are valuable for policy in tobacco control in countries of the region.

The meeting agreed that a network should be developed. First, a meeting of like-minded individuals would be set up. These people should agree that in each country one institution should take the lead and fund small research grants or multi-country projects.